



HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Le Fanu exhibits diverse use of architectural elements of Federation Queen Anne style to create visual interest. (Criterion 1.2)

Le Fanu addresses the corner of Marine Terrace and Salvado Street and provides a landmark for the area. (Criterion 1.3)

Le Fanu comprises an important element in the streetscape of Cottesloe Beach and an important element of the gracious old residential building stock for which the suburb is renowned. (Criterion 1.4)

Le Fanu is one of four notable historic places which form an historic precinct, i.e. the neighbouring *Tukurua*, *Belvedere* and the nearby *Meath*. (Criterion 1.4)

Le Fanu contains several notable internal spaces which are significant examples of their period and retain much of their integrity (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Le Fanu has significance for its close association with the Holmes family; Mr Holmes was General Manager of the Bank of Western Australia which had widespread influence in the State. Mrs Holmes and her daughters were instrumental in the founding of the Ministering League Convalescent Home - *Meath*. (Criterion 2.3)

Le Fanu has significance as an example of a grand beachside home, exhibiting in its design and scale the affluence which accompanied the gold boom of the 1890s. (Criterion 2.4)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Le Fanu has social significance as the residence of a family who had a notable effect upon the social life of the community in Western Australia, H. D. Holmes through his position as general manager of the State's largest bank, and, Mrs Holmes and her daughters through their charitable acts arising from a philosophy that privilege entails responsibility - *noblesse oblige*. (Criterion 4.1)

Le Fanu contributes to the community's sense of place by being representative of the style of the gracious, turn-of-the-century summer residences which were built by the well-to-do and which are representative of the historical foundation of the suburb. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

Le Fanu is distinctive in being a type of large, limestone residence set in large grounds, which was once comparatively common in Cottesloe, but has become scarce through subdivision and redevelopment of sites. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Le Fanu is representative of the style of beach residence built by the wealthy classes in Western Australia around the turn of the twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Le Fanu is generally in poor condition, with some parts of the structure close to failure. Other parts of the property, sheltered from weather and removed from areas of change are in sound condition.

The limestone of the exterior walls is severely weathered and, in some areas, badly decayed to the southern, western, north-western facades and the facades of the 'ballroom'.¹ There is considerable evidence of exfoliation on the southern and western facades exposed to weathering. There is also decay in the limestone walls due to rising and falling damp in the limestone walls. There is evidence of structural movement and fabric decay at the junction of limestone walling and brick quoins and arches. Brick quoining has disintegrated in places on the western facade. In other places on the southern and western facades brick arches are cracked due to rusting of lintels, erosion of brickwork and structural movement. The hard cement render to the lower level of the north-west corner and the semi-basement of the 'ballroom' is severely cracked in places, providing evidence of deteriorating fabric beneath.

Within the roof space there is evidence of birds nesting, water penetration, sand penetration, asbestos deterioration and collapsing chimneys. The chimneys present an immediate safety issue. The build up of sand, bird detritus and water penetration puts the ceilings of the house at risk. The ceilings of the lounge area, the main entry hall and sitting room are supported to prevent collapse.

The original timber verandah floors have been replaced with concrete and the timber posts cut and set directly into the concrete topping of the slab, resulting in the bottom of the posts deteriorating. Balustrading and any

¹ The owner maintains that this has never been a ballroom, but was used as a music room or sewing room. However, it is referred to as a ballroom on the floor plan.

other detailing has been removed leaving simple square posts unsupported between foot and head. The verandah roof framing on the south and west has been left untreated in an exposed situation and the timbers are showing signs of exfoliation.

Internally there is considerable evidence of water penetration causing breakdown of the sand lime wall plastering and the lathe and plaster ceilings. Corrosion of fixings, due to the ozone atmosphere, has also led to the collapse of several sections of highly ornate original ceilings in the dining room and 'ballroom'. The 'ballroom' is relatively open to weathering as the glazing is extensively broken and much of the window framing is falling apart.

The garden wall is extensively eroded, particularly the jointing. In several places it is possible to see daylight through the wall. Whilst the wall is in need of extensive repointing, there is little evidence of pronounced movement.

A dangerous building notice was issued by the Town of Cottesloe on 26 March 1996, but a subsequent application for demolition was refused. Despite its dilapidated condition the property is capable of being conserved.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Le Fanu has a high degree of integrity, although this has been compromised in the interior of the eastern wing by recent interventions.

The external fabric of *Le Fanu* is comparatively little altered, apart from the replacement of the original roof with corrugated asbestos sheeting. The fabric, particularly the original fabric, is neglected. Externally *Le Fanu* has a high degree of authenticity as it retains interesting and unusual architectural elements.

Internally *Le Fanu* has much of its original fabric intact, particularly in several of the major internal spaces, such as the sitting room and master bedroom on the western side, the 'ballroom', the dining room and study. Much of the interior in the eastern wing has been extensively altered.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Le Fanu was constructed as a gracious family residence for the Holmes family who had a significant effect upon the cultural, social and charitable life of Perth. Following its sale to the Anglican Church *Le Fanu* continued to be associated with the Ministering Children's League and was a meeting place for religious organisations and groups.

The original intention of the place is comparatively intact and capable of being restored. The interventions in the original fabric of the building are clearly evident and could be reversed.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by HCWA in 1995. The physical evidence has been compiled by Ian Hocking, Architect, of Hocking Planning and Architecture. Additional research has been compiled by HCWA staff.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Cottesloe was named by Governor Broome, in 1886. It soon became the gathering point for the wealthy of Perth, during the summer months as the beach is sheltered from the south-west winds in summer and protected by the various reefs and islands off the coast.² Although the Perth to Fremantle railway was opened in 1881, and provided an opportunity for the more permanent settlement of the area, the beach remained relatively unsettled with only six permanent residents living there in 1893.³ In 1895, the Government granted £110 for improvements to the Perth to Fremantle Road, which passed through South Cottesloe, and a further £100 towards its maintenance, all of which hastened the growth of Cottesloe as a suburb and made the beach areas more accessible.

By 1897, the population of Cottesloe was approaching 1,500 permanent residents,⁴ with an increasing number of prominent Perth people building summer homes near the ocean. By the turn of the century, residents in South Cottesloe included: the Chief Justice, Septimus Burt (*Tukurua*, 9 Rosendo Street); Thomas Campbell, father of the mining investor J. J. Campbell (*Belvedere*, 12 Rosendo Street); the prominent architect, J. J. Talbot Hobbs; the Master and Registrar of the Supreme Court, F. A. Moseley; Mr. J. C. G. Foulkes, MLA (*The Summit*, cnr. Avonmore Terrace and Salvado Street); and, the Chairman of the Perth Gas Company, F. Crowder, (*Abbeyfeale View*, cnr. Broome and Junction streets).⁵

Banksia (later *Le Fanu*) was built as a residence for Henry Diggins Holmes, General Manager of the Bank of Western Australia, at the corner of Salvado Road, close to the dunes of Cottesloe Beach. The date of construction is uncertain but Holmes is shown as being a resident of Cottesloe Beach in *Wises' Post Office Directory* by 1895.⁶ Holmes was appointed General Manager of the Bank of Western Australia in 1890. The position was an

² James, R. M. *Heritage of Pines: A History of Cottesloe Town of Cottesloe*, Cottesloe, 1977, p.

23.

³ F. A. Moseley quoted in James, p. 15.

⁴ Clarke, M., *A History of Cottesloe* p. 7.

⁵ James, pp. 11-12, 15-16, 21-22, 30-31.

⁶ *Wises' Post Office Directory* 1895.

influential one. The bank, established in 1837, had 41 branches throughout Western Australia and was the leading bank in the State.⁷

Holmes's family - wife, Marion, and daughters, Phoebe and Estelle - were responsible for the establishment of the Ministering Children's League which, in 1896, began construction of a Convalescent Home on a Government land grant at the corner of Wharton and Marine Parade. This building is now known as *Meath*.⁸ Groups of children from the convalescent home often met at Banksia on a Saturday to do needlework and to raise funds for good deeds. The women of the family were also involved in other charitable works, particularly the YMCA and the Girl's Friendly Society.⁹

Banksia was used as a family residence until 1945, when it was transferred to the Church of England's Perth Diocese and the name was changed to *Le Fanu* after the, then, Archbishop of Perth the Most Rev. H. F. Le Fanu. The purchase of the home by the Anglican Church was closely allied with the Church's involvement in the Ministering Children's League and thus continued the association of the Holmes family with that organisation. *Le Fanu* served as a meeting place for religious organisations and groups, for devotional and educational purposes.

In 1973, *Le Fanu* was purchased by Mrs J. Fenwick of Esperance for use as a residence. The house has continued to be used as a residence, by Mrs Fenwick - now Mrs Drake-Brockman - until 1997. Not all the rooms of the house are currently used or are capable of use. In 1992, Mrs Drake-Brockman was refused permission to demolish the west facade by Cottesloe Town Council. The reason cited for the request for demolition was the inability to obtain a view from the rear (eastern end) of the house where the current owner is living. A dangerous building notice was issued by the Town of Cottesloe on 26 March 1996, but a subsequent application for demolition was refused.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Le Fanu is located on the north-east corner of Marine Terrace and Salvado Street, South Cottesloe, with its main entry facing southwards onto Salvado Street and most of its main rooms and verandah facing westwards and north-westwards across Marine Terrace to the foreshore and ocean.

Le Fanu is a neighbouring property to *Tukurua* (1896). *Belvedere* (c. 1897) faces *Tukurua* across Rosendo Street. Three blocks to the south *Meath* occupies the north-east corner of the intersection of Wharton Street and Marine Parade.

⁷ Wisers' *Post Office Directory* 1898; Battye, J.S. *Cyclopedia of Western Australia* Perth, 1912, Vol.1, p.612; Stannage, C.T. *The People of Perth. A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* Perth, 1979, p. 218.

⁸ James, R. M. op cit. p. 72.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 71.

This is the most significant building group of its period within Cottesloe and one of the most significant groups of its period within Western Australia.¹⁰

History

It is understood that the house has been built in the following stages:

The eastern wing was the earlier structure. The walls of this section are entirely in limestone without cavity;

The western wing was built next and has limestone walls with a brick cavity;

The 'ballroom' is believed to have been built after the other wings were constructed;

The ablutions block, the extension and closing in of the north verandah, removal of the bullnose verandah and its replacement with asbestos sheeting and replacement of the main roof by asbestos sheeting were undertaken during the period of ownership of the Anglican Church; and,

The internal alterations in the eastern wing have been undertaken by the present owner from 1992 onwards.

Description

General

Le Fanu is a large single-storey residence, of architectural distinction, set within a garden enclosed by a limestone wall/retaining wall. The building has dressed limestone walls, with openings bordered in pointed brickwork. It has a complex ground floor plan, a lower floor on the north side and an extensive cellar under the east wing. The galvanised iron roof has been replaced by asbestos, which also masks the Tudor details on the gables to all elevations. The octagonal belled roof, with finial, to the study bay window on the south-east side, retains its galvanised iron roof. The surrounding verandahs are supported on simple square timber posts.

Le Fanu is sited on a large corner block of 2,218 square metres. The property is in very close proximity to two extant residences of similar period: *Tukurua* (1896) and *Belvedere* (c. 1897). To the east a two-storeyed residence has been constructed on Lot 11, subdivided from the *Le Fanu* original holding. This development causes serious overlooking problems, particularly as *Le Fanu* has no internal bathrooms or toilets and is reliant on access to the Ablutions Block.

When it was used by the Anglican Church a single-storey Ablutions Block was developed to the north-east of the house. This gave enclosure on three

¹⁰ The Cottesloe group comprised beach houses. The other groups were the townhouses in Adelaide Terrace and the summer-houses in Peppermint Grove.

sides to an east facing courtyard, which is now roofed with a pyramidal timber pergola, to minimise overlooking.

Grounds

Le Fanu is set within quite large grounds which have minimal landscaping. There are perimeter plantings on all sides, behind limestone walls/retaining walls to the two street frontages and a retaining wall to the northern boundary. Pedestrian access is gained from Salvado Street, opposite the front entry. Vehicular access is obtained from Marine Terrace, at the north-western corner of the property, where a hole has been made in the limestone walling.

The site slopes from east to west and from south to north. The main floor level of the house is close to the level of Salvado Street opposite the front entry. The south-eastern corner of the house is cut into the slope and the north-western corner is almost a full storey above ground level.

Accommodation

Le Fanu is a substantial family home comprising, at ground level:

- an entry hall;
- two passages;
- 'ballroom';
- dining room;
- attached study;
- sitting room;
- open plan lounge, made from two former rooms;
- master bed room;
- three bed rooms;
- dressing room;
- family area, opening to study and dining rooms;
- small sitting room;
- kitchen;
- pantry;
- external ablutions.

There is a large cellar below the family/study/dining areas (not inspected, but accessible from the family room and a door in the north wall); an undercroft below the 'ballroom'; and storage space in the open underfloor cavity below the master bed room and its associated verandah.

Exterior

Le Fanu has a comparatively low irregular massing with long facades to both street frontages. It is built of local limestone with brick quoins to all openings in a Federation Queen Anne style. The roof features are the most apparent elements of the house from the street. The roof has gables on the south, west, north-west, north and east elevations, of rough cast render featuring tudor details in timber. The gables and the upper walls, above the verandahs, have been lined with asbestos sheeting, with timber cover straps to joints. A projecting bay window, on the southern elevation, is roofed with an octagonal belled roof, topped with an elegant finial. The five chimneys, above the roof, have been rendered and painted. The original roof has been replaced with corrugated asbestos cement sheeting, apart from the galvanised iron belled roof to the bay window of the study. There is a wide verandah on the three public facades of the house, to the south west, west and north west sides, supported by simple timber posts and timber roof framing. A second verandah occupies the north and north east private facades of the house. The roofs of all verandahs have been replaced with corrugated asbestos cement sheeting.

The main entrance is on the south facade, opening to Salvado Street, across the verandah. Three broad steps connect the verandah and the garden path. The main entrance is within a recessed doorway topped by a semicircular brick arch. This recess has a tessellated tile floor. Its four panel entry door is set within a frame of sidelights and fanlights.

The entry verandah occupies the western end of the asymmetrical south facade. The verandah is terminated by a projecting gable, with timber brackets and consoles, above a graceful arched casement sash window. The shape of the window is emphasised by the shallow brick arch and quoining. The arch and quoining are separated by a decorative band of stucco foliage, at window head height, with a further stucco band below the gable. East of the projecting gable is an octagonal bay window roofed with an octagonal belled tower, topped by an elegant finial. The three windows of this bay are closely grouped and the quoins form a tightly grouped decorative element which gives the house strong individuality. Between the projecting gable and the bay window is an opening to the cellar beneath the house, set at ground level.

On the western side the house overlooks the ocean. This facade is set behind a continuous verandah, which steps around a gabled bay window at the southern end, a hipped bay window towards the northern end and a diagonal projecting gabled bay facing north-west. The verandah roof is supported by posts, however the balustrade is missing. As with the southern elevation, the facade above the roof line of the verandah has been lined with asbestos cladding. There is a ramp to the verandah which is not

original. It was constructed by the present owner to remove rubble during renovations.¹¹

The site slopes from south to north allowing an undercroft to produce a two-storeyed facade on the northern side. Under the north-western corner the undercroft is defined by two large openings, one shallow arched and one square headed, in the largely reconstructed lower verandah. The verandah returns onto the northern facade where it terminates against the two-storey pavilion, occupied by the former 'ballroom', over a semi-basement undercroft. The 'ballroom' and its undercroft have a semi-octagonal northern end, with the lower half rendered and the upper half in the original limestone and brickwork. The 'ballroom' is taller than the other rooms in the house. Its double hung windows have fanlights above. The hipped roof of the 'ballroom' springs from an eaves close to the same level as the apex of the north-west gable.

The former 'ballroom' marks the transition from the public to the private facades of the house.

On the northern facade the former verandah has been extended and closed in. The former bullnose return verandah roof has been removed and replaced with a higher, wider skillion roof, which spans to a new timber framed wall, partly glazed, above a concrete block lower wall. Either side of the concrete block wall ramps have been installed to move between the three levels of the main house, ablutions and garden. The materials and the configuration of this change indicate that it was constructed at the same time as the ablution block.

The construction of the northern and eastern facades continues the same detailing as the main facades of the house, ie. dressed limestone walling laid in a random pattern, with pointed jointing, tuck pointed brick quoining and shallow arched heads to all openings.

The gabled north wall of the former servant's bedroom appears to have not had a verandah until the northern verandah was changed and extended across it. The return wall, facing east, originally had a skillion verandah which covered the path to the former back door. A new skillion verandah has been constructed around the western and southern sides of the east courtyard, at the same height as the adjacent ablution block and carport. This has enabled a substantial pyramidal shaped timber pergola, of triangulated construction, to be pitched from the fascia boards over the courtyard. The pergola was constructed in March 1994 and is the subject of a dispute with the Cottesloe Town Council.

Interior

¹¹ Personal communication between Ian Elliot of HCWA and Mrs Drake-Brockman on 29 January 1998.

Le Fanu's interior is organised into west and east wings. The passageways central to each wing join at the northern end of the Entry Hall. The entry hall is comparatively intact apart from the large opening made in the eastern wall.

The entry hall has a tessellated tile floor, the original joinery, ceiling, decorative coved cornices and ceiling rose. The four panel entry door is bordered by stained glass sidelights and a fanlight, which features a coat of arms, the emblem of the Perth Anglican Diocese.¹² The east and north passages are entered through arched plaster cornices, supported on pilasters. The ceiling has fallen in places and is supported on two arco-props.

The ceiling of the sitting room west of the entry hall has been replaced during the between the wars period, and the built in perimeter jarrah seating appears to be a later addition. The rest of the original fabric is intact. The ceiling is collapsing in places and the room is uninhabitable.

The bed room, dressing room and master bedroom are all comparatively intact. The bed room and dressing room have their original plain finishes intact, ie. undecorated ceilings, walls plain except for a dado relief and timber floors. The master bedroom retains its original ceiling, coved cornices, plastered walls and joinery. It has lost its fireplace mantle, as have most of the fireplaces in the house. Part of the ceiling has fallen and there is evidence of white ant activity in the room. The recent ceiling fall has made the owner increasingly nervous to continue to use the room.

The 'ballroom' is a grand space, of tall proportions, surmounted by an elaborately decorated coffered ceiling, incorporating two large ceiling roses, and a wide cornice with arabesque patterning. The space is lit on three sides by tall double hung windows with fanlights above. On the west wall a glazed door opens to the verandah. The original joinery is relatively intact but in very poor condition. During the time of ownership by the Anglican Church, a raised dais was added at the northern end to contribute to the room's use as a meeting place for devotional and educational purposes.¹³ Despite its very poor condition the 'ballroom' is intact, apart from the loss of its fireplace mantle. The number of people using the 'ballroom' at any one time needs to be carefully monitored until its structural capacity has been determined.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Conversation between Kris Bizzaca and Archivist of Anglican Church, 16 July 1998. Although there is no record of either the room's use as a chapel or its consecration, local history contends that the place was used as a chapel from 1945. He recalled that he had once visited the house during a time when he was friends with the son of the caretaker and that he himself remembered that the chapel existed.

The eastern wing of the house has been much changed by the present owner, in attempting to bring views and light into the eastern end of the house. The present lounge area has been created by breaking four large square arched openings into the two passages. This area is now structurally unsound and the disintegrating ceiling is supported with several arco-props.

The dining area remains largely intact apart from a large square opening to the family area in the eastern wall. The dining room consists of two large interrelated spaces linked through a square arched opening, carried on corinthian columns and pilasters. The inner space is centred on a grandly scaled chimney breast, which steps in its width, as it rises to the coffered ceiling with its central rose. Parts of this ceiling have fallen. The outer space which opens to the southern verandah, and contains the gracious arched south facing window, is intact and sound.

The dining area is complemented by the study which is an awkwardly shaped room with its extension into the octagonal bay window. The room is comparatively intact, apart from the large square arched opening to the family area in the north wall and the missing mantle, however, the finishes in this room have deteriorated badly and are largely incapable of restoration.

The family area and the kitchen have been much changed and have lost most of their original fabric.

The bed/sitting room, opposite the dining room and the sitting room, east of it, are small, plain former servants quarters. These spaces are comparatively intact, apart from damage caused by white ants.

Other

The undercroft forms a semi-basement to the 'ballroom'. It is reached from an external door on its eastern side. The internal space is subdivided by a series of posts which support brackets to reduce the span of the beams. The roof timbers are twisted and need to be stabilised. The ripple iron ceiling forms pans between the beams. The walls have been skim coated and painted. The concrete floor is uneven.

The cellar beneath the eastern wing was not able to be inspected.

The substantial ablution block provides the only bathroom and laundry facilities for the house. It comprises seven toilets, seven showers, two washup rooms with three handbasins in each, one laundry and one small private bathroom. In the 1992 alterations it was intended to convert part of this area into a carport. With the development of Lot 11 Salvado Street, vehicular access was curtailed. A car is now garaged in a colorbond shed, also used for gardening purposes, situated on the property. Vehicular access to the northern side of the house is through a hole knocked in the limestone wall at the northern corner of the Marine Terrace frontage. No driveway has been provided.

The perimeter walling in coursed limestone, with a flush capping extends, along the whole of the southern boundary, apart from the entry gate, and the western boundary as far as the improvised vehicular entry. A limestone retaining wall is located along the northern boundary maintaining the north yard of *Le Fanu* above the height of the neighbouring lot occupied by *Tukurua*.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
